

\$97

SPECIAL REPORT

A Tactical Approach to Content Marketing

How to create content that
accelerates inbound lead
quality and conversions



powered by MECLABS

Special Report

A Tactical Approach to Content Marketing

How to create content that accelerates inbound lead quality and conversions

Authors

Kaci Bower, Senior Research Analyst

Contributors

Sergio Balegno, Director of Research

Jen Doyle, Senior Research Manager

Production Editor

Brad Bortone, Senior Research Editor



A Tactical Approach to Content Marketing

US \$97.00 / ISBN: 978-1-936390-54-0

Copyright © 2012 by MarketingSherpa LLC

All rights reserved. No part of this report may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, faxing, emailing, posting online or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the Publisher.

To purchase additional copies of this report, please visit:

<http://www.sherpastore.com>

Bulk discounts are available for multiple copies. Please contact:

Customer Service

MarketingSherpa LLC

+1 (877) 895-1717 (outside US, call +401-247-7655)

service@sherpastore.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	ii
Executive Summary	1
<i>A Tactical Approach to Content Marketing</i>	1
Identifying Top Performing Content Products	2
Chart: Three-dimensional view of content effectiveness, difficulty and usage	2
Converting Traffic through Content	3
<i>How does optimized content accelerate traffic conversions and lead quality?</i>	3
Chart: The effect of content creation on organic traffic conversion rates and lead quality	3
Improving ROI with Nurturing Content	4
<i>How does engaging content play a role in lead nurturing?</i>	4
Chart: Lead generation ROI by use of lead nurturing	4
Fulfilling the Need for Content	5
<i>Conducting a content inventory audit</i>	5
Example: Auditing existing content for repurposing	5
<i>Incorporate user-generated content</i>	6
<i>Develop original content</i>	6
<i>Five Content Marketing Tactics for Picking Topics and Setting Goals</i>	7
Budgeting for Content Marketing	10
Chart: Allocation of online marketing dollars (<i>representing 51% of total budgets on average</i>)	10
Measuring The Results of Content Marketing	11
Gauging overall engagement	12
Measuring impact	13
Finding gaps in content	14
Analysts can be amazing	14
Insights on Successes with Content Marketing	15
<i>What do marketers say works well when it comes to their content marketing?</i>	15
Insights on Challenges with Content Marketing	17
<i>What do marketers say are their biggest content marketing challenges?</i>	17

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A TACTICAL APPROACH TO CONTENT MARKETING

People research before they buy. **The average shopper used 10.4 sources of information to make a purchase decision in 2011, up from 5.3 sources a year earlier**, according to a study from Google and Shopper Sciences.

Content marketing fits this trend. Marketers supply an assortment of content pieces – from blogs and webinars, to whitepapers and videos – to help shoppers and corporate decision makers solve problems and learn how their companies can help.

Content marketing is not a direct sales strategy. It is a gradual and ongoing strategy, which makes it harder to execute well and measure effectively. Brands need to systematically work to understand where their customers are in the buying cycle, where they can insert their content, and what the return will be for their efforts.

Bottom Line: the more relevant the content, the better the chance of connecting with customers and improving results.

This Special Report looks at how marketers can develop a useful and tactical approach to content marketing.

Highlights of this report include:

- An examination of content products in terms of usage, effectiveness and difficulty to execute
- The extent to which content improves organic search traffic conversion rates
- The role of content in high-performing lead nurturing programs
- A roadmap for identifying and fulfilling content needs
- Budget allocations for content and its inbound marketing counterparts – SEO and social media
- An approach to connect the dots and measure content marketing results
- Insights on marketers' successes and challenges with content marketing

Special Reports

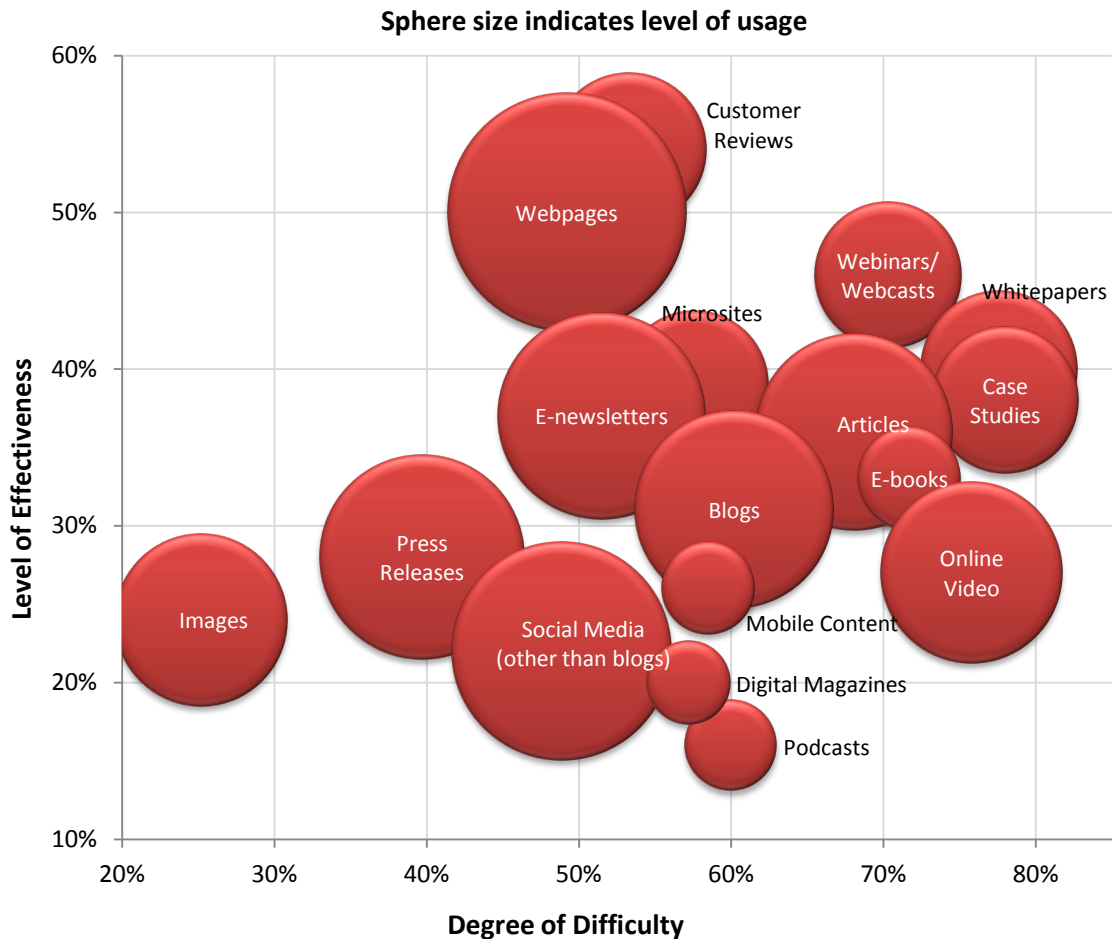
MarketingSherpa Special Reports provide marketing executives with concise research, insights and actionable advice, derived from unique market segments for guiding strategic and tactical decision making.

IDENTIFYING TOP PERFORMING CONTENT PRODUCTS

Content creation works best when you start with an understanding of your target audience, and its behaviors and preferences for information discovery, retrieval, consumption and sharing. Major search engines index a variety of content formats, from videos, PDFs and images to social media content like Twitter feeds, Facebook updates and blog posts. **Marketers realize they can harness the power of content to engage target audiences and drive leads.**

But which types of content perform the best and are practical to use?

Chart: Three-dimensional view of content effectiveness, difficulty and usage



Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Search Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded April 2011, N=1,530

No matter what content product you choose, you'll want to **make it easy for people to find, consume and share your content** by identifying with their needs, and then addressing those in your topics, keywords and formats.

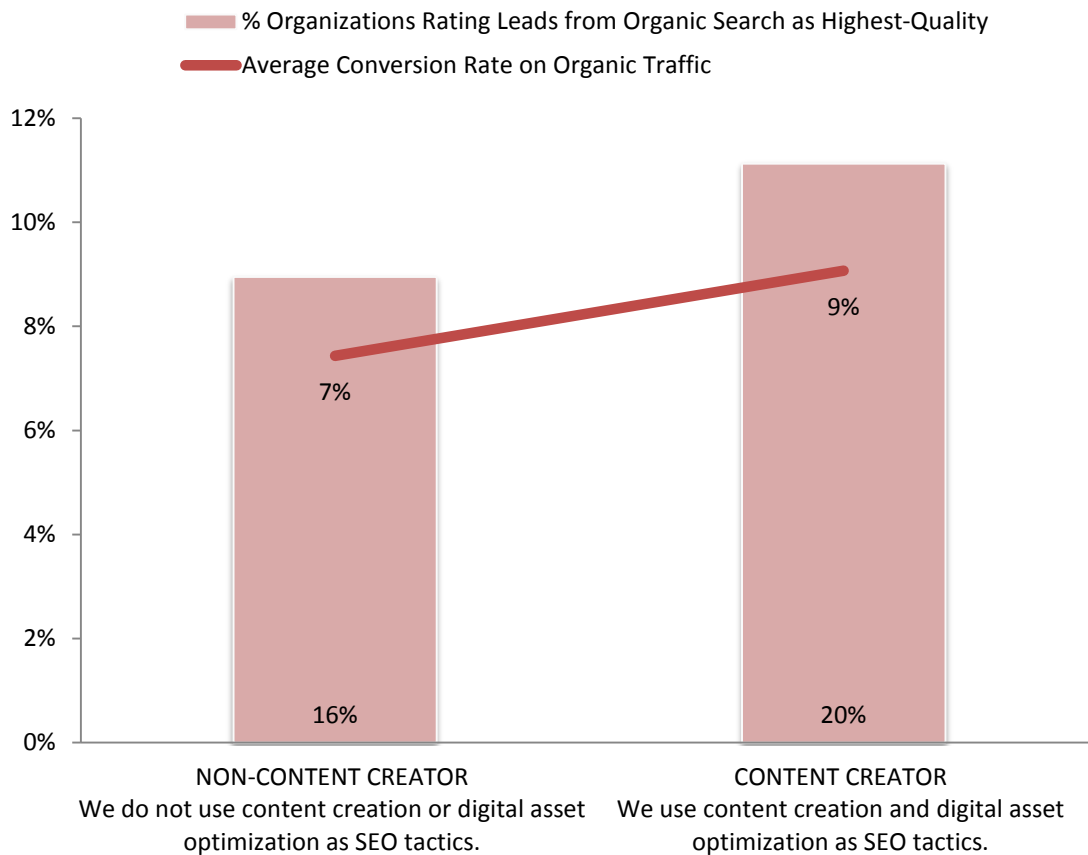
CONVERTING TRAFFIC THROUGH CONTENT

HOW DOES OPTIMIZED CONTENT ACCELERATE TRAFFIC CONVERSIONS AND LEAD QUALITY?

Content can be both a digital asset and a liability. It depends on the content used, and how organizations put it to use.

As this chart shows, content creators (organizations that create and optimize content) successfully convert 29% more organic traffic into leads. Not only that, but these leads are of higher quality. As you see, 20% of organizations employing content marketing consider their leads from organic search traffic to be of the highest quality, compared to just 16% of non-content creators. Why is this important? Because **better leads produce better outcomes**.

Chart: The effect of content creation on organic traffic conversion rates and lead quality



Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Search Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded April 2011, N=1,530

Producing a variety of content creates more potential touch points with prospects and customers.

Optimized, relevant and compelling content moves prospects through awareness, consideration, inquiry, purchase and retention.

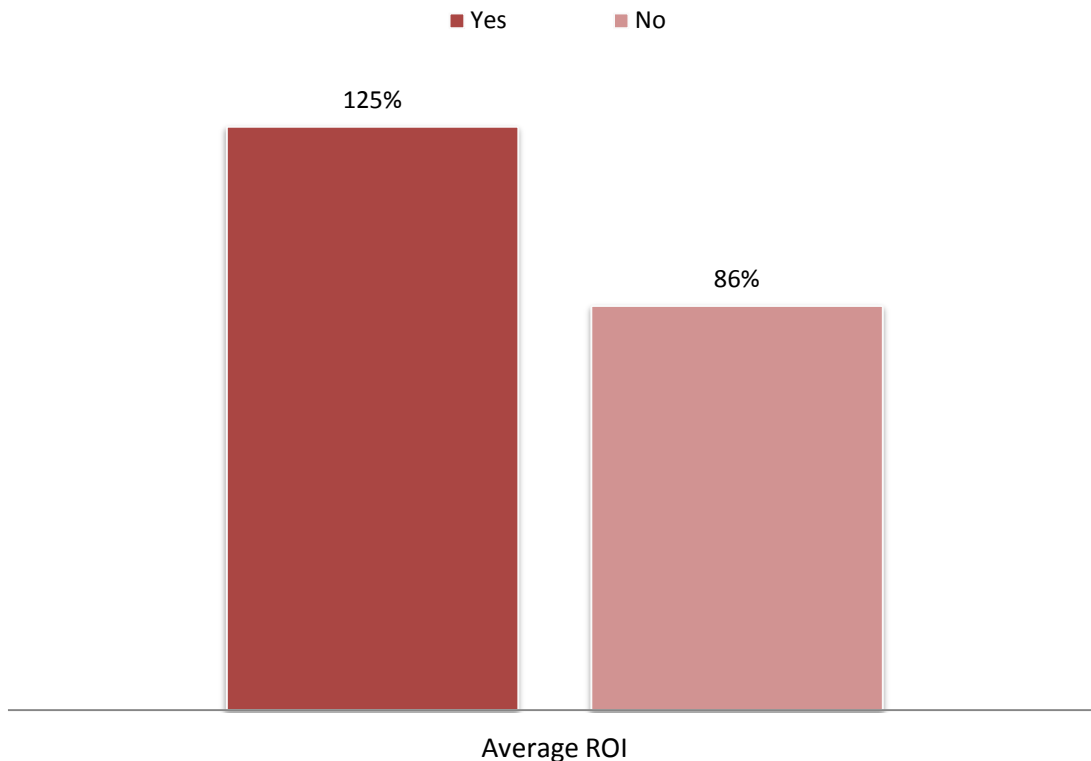
IMPROVING ROI WITH NURTURING CONTENT

HOW DOES ENGAGING CONTENT PLAY A ROLE IN LEAD NURTURING?

In order to impress today's buyer, organizations must create a highly engaging experience. They must **delight buyers with relevant, important and interesting content** that not only provides buyers with the information that they want and need, but provides it at a time that they choose to receive it, in a way that's convenient for them. **Nurturing leads with targeted, segmented content is the best way to win their trust,** and protect the initial investments made to convert them.

Chart: Lead generation ROI by use of lead nurturing

Q. Do you have lead nurturing campaigns in place?



Source: ©2012 MarketingSherpa Lead Generation Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded January 2012, N=1,915

On average, organizations that nurture their leads experience a **45% lift in lead generation ROI** over those organizations that do not.

By nurturing leads with relevant content, such as webinars, whitepapers or thought leadership articles, organizations can effectively **encourage the right buyers to engage with Sales at the right time, and improve overall lead generation ROI.**

FULFILLING THE NEED FOR CONTENT

Sharing compelling content is a critical component of marketing. **The more relevant your content is, the better your chance of connecting with customers and improving results.**

However, creating original content is a time-consuming and expensive proposition. The pressure on marketers to produce original articles, posts, videos and other content for marketing purposes can be daunting. But, entirely original content is not the only strategy to consider when addressing your content requirements.

CONDUCTING A CONTENT INVENTORY AUDIT

The first step to fulfilling your content needs is an audit of any existing content that has potential for marketing purposes. Start with your website, blogs, sales collateral and publicity. Look deeper into the research, presentations, interviews and community outreach you have recently conducted. **The more departments you include in your audit, the more content you will uncover.**

Next to each piece of existing content, list the ways you can repurpose it. By repurposing, we mean updating existing content or modifying content from one format to another, in an efficient way that is current and relevant to the target audience. Your organization has likely already created many types of relevant content, including whitepapers, analyst reports, PowerPoint presentations, articles, webinars and more. Most of this existing content has reached only a small share of your intended audience. **Not repurposing existing content for marketing purposes is a missed opportunity.**

Ultimately, the art of repurposing lies in the editor's ability to modify existing content in a relevant way to the reader. **Strive to share your company's thought leadership and teach your readers something new.**

EXAMPLE: AUDITING EXISTING CONTENT FOR REPURPOSING

Existing content:	Repurpose existing content as:
News releases	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Rewrite in conversational tone and post on blog
Video of CEO annual meeting speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Post video on YouTube▪ Convert audio to MP3 for downloadable podcast▪ Transcribe speech and post on blog
Customer case studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Create PowerPoint and post on SlideShare▪ Record PowerPoint with voiceover as video and post on YouTube▪ Post video (YouTube embed code) on blog
PowerPoint presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Record with voiceover as video and post on YouTube▪ Convert audio to MP3 for downloadable podcast▪ Rewrite in conversational tone and post on blog
Self-published articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Rewrite in conversational tone and post as a blog series▪ Record audio to MP3 for downloadable podcast

Outdated blog posts	▪ Rewrite with updated titles, references, etc. and post on blog
---------------------	--

Round out your existing content with supplemental information. For instance, a popular e-book may provide an opportunity for an author to be interviewed and reveal their top takeaways. The interview can then be recorded as an audio podcast or YouTube video, and shared through your email communications.

INCORPORATE USER-GENERATED CONTENT

The next step is to look at user-generated content (UGC). If your brand is in the hands of the consumer, why not use these words, pictures, and thoughts in your marketing campaigns? The explosion of social media provides a wealth of comments, testimonials, reviews and ratings for you to incorporate into messages, alongside comments you may collect from your customer service department and website.

Taking advantage of these unsolicited testimonials adds a human touch to your messages. Placing UGC center-stage allows your supporters to connect in new ways. When consumers share common interests, they build trustworthy communities, and help you promote your products. As you control the content, you can shape the story and have the UGC reinforce or emphasize your key messaging points.

Today's consumer relies more on fellow consumers' opinions than the brand's claims when making their purchasing decisions. Begin by incorporating testimonials for your product or service, and then turn them into "read customer review" links to see if they outperform other links embedded in your email.

Do not be afraid to use a well-written negative comment. **Including a less-than-stellar comment will give your reviews more credibility, and differentiate your product in situations in which it is not a good fit.**

Copyright is always a concern in the digital age. Work with your legal department to create and include your firm's Terms and Conditions on your website, blogs and any UGC contests you implement. If your company is not comfortable delving into this area of publication, you may suggest collaborating with influential bloggers or outspoken customers to co-create content with you.

DEVELOP ORIGINAL CONTENT

Having exhausted your repurposed and user-generated content, the final step is to create original, relevant content. The audit of existing content inventory will help expose areas where you are content-rich or in need of substance. With this insight, you can quickly determine which areas you need to focus on for original content. **Creating original content can be a time- and resource-consuming task, so you will need to prioritize and find the most efficient production route.**

Original content gives you the most control of your content keyword strategy. Developing original content based on strategic keyword use allows prospects and customers to find the information most relevant to their needs. Moreover, starting from scratch gives you the opportunity to produce content that your readers can digest with great enthusiasm and possibly share.

The secret to creating contagious content is either educating or solving the reader's problem without explicitly selling your product. When you move away from focusing on just the product or service and towards helping the consumer, you will generate new ideas.

FIVE CONTENT MARKETING TACTICS FOR PICKING TOPICS AND SETTING GOALS

Summary

Creating good content is hard work, so it's understandable to want to get it out of the way. But, you have to be careful not to rush your planning. Otherwise, you could miss the mark and have to start over again.

We pulled tactics from interviews with three content marketers to help you get better results with your whitepapers, blog posts, webinars and other content. They provided advice on how to align your content with your goals, audience and opportunities. Find out what you must know before publishing, and how you can find new opportunities for topics to cover.

Tactic #1. Always set a goal beforehand

Each piece of content should be created with a goal in mind. The goal should drive the design and topic.

"Too many companies go that step without really considering why they should create a piece of content, and what purpose it is going to serve," says Stephanie Tilton, Principal Consultant, Ten Ton Marketing. Ten Ton helps companies create and improve their content.

"They assume they need a whitepaper without first considering *why* they need a whitepaper. They have a checklist of content-types they need to produce, saying, 'We have this product, so we definitely need a whitepaper, a brochure, a case study and maybe a webinar,'" says Tilton.

Marketers are shooting in the dark with this approach. Instead, **target your content to a specific stage in your buying cycle, or funnel.** For your next piece of content, what do you want it to support?

- Top-funnel goals - raise general awareness of your brand; increase website traffic
- Mid-funnel goals - raise awareness of your products and services
- Late-funnel goals - get prospects to choose you over competitors

Setting even basic, high-level goals will provide a compass to keep you on track when you're planning and publishing.

Tactic #2. Educate new prospects - don't sell them

There is a time for promoting your products and services; it's not when you are trying to attract visitors to your website. **You will pull more people into your funnel by focusing on education.**

"It is much too early for a prospect to even consider the specifics of your solution," Tilton says. She added that your content at this stage should "truly be valuable in terms of helping the reader learn about the issue at hand."

For example, a Florida-based HVAC service, Conditioned Air, publishes a blog with tips on cooling and dehumidifying homes and businesses in the region. The posts:

- Provide useful information
- Focus on educating visitors
- Avoid direct promotion of the company
- Have helped attract organic search traffic

Unique visitors make up 85% of Conditioned Air's site traffic, and 40% come from organic search, says Theo Etzel, CEO, Conditioned Air.

In another example, ChannelAdvisor, an e-commerce software provider, publishes whitepapers on paid search marketing, social marketing and other topics. The whitepapers do not mention the company's services until the final page, where a boilerplate message is included.

Tactic #3. Do not choose formats by default

Instead of mimicking what is offered in your industry, you should **choose content formats that best suit your needs.**

A few tips on formats:

- **Videos:** -Both ChannelAdvisor and Conditioned Air use videos to explain helpful but technical information that would be painful to read in a whitepaper (such as how an air conditioning system works).
- **E-books:** Finding that many prospects did not have time to read a 15-page whitepaper, ChannelAdvisor improved results by repurposing whitepapers into e-books with more graphics and call-out quotes, says Delisa Reavis, Senior Manager, Corporate Communications, ChannelAdvisor.
- **Customer Reviews:** Reviews can be very effective, but only 33% of marketers publish them, according to the MarketingSherpa *2012 Search Marketing Benchmark Report – SEO Edition*.

Tactic #4. Write to your ideal customer

Once you pick a goal for your content, you need to pick a topic. One strategy is to put yourself in the mind of your ideal prospect – the best person you could possibly reach – and list the information that person needs.

For every point in the funnel, consider what questions that person would ask.

- At the beginning of the funnel, the ideal prospect for a discount footwear retailer might ask, "How can I find the best deals on new footwear?"
- In the middle of the funnel, the ideal prospect for a B2B business might ask, "What products or services does this company offer?"

Once you understand the needs of your ideal prospect, you can then work to address the needs of a specific type, or segment, of prospects. **Targeting a segment will add specificity to the questions you need to answer.**

For instance, in the retail footwear example mentioned above, is the prospect:

- a runner?
- male or female?

A female runner might be looking for something more specific than “the best deals on new footwear.” Her question might be, “How can I find the best deals on new women’s running shoes?” The company’s content should help her answer this question.

Tactic #5. Find more opportunities through search data

People often use search engines to answer a question or solve a problem. **By looking at search data, you can get detect the problems that prospects are trying to solve in your industry, and create content to help them.**

You can use Google’s free Keyword Tool to do this type of analysis. Enter keywords related to your business and the tool will report:

- Related keywords
- Their search volumes

The tool will also report the relative competition for bidding on paid search ads for each keyword. You can use this information to get a rough idea of the competition you’d face in each keyword’s natural search rankings. You can also manually search the keywords and analyze their results to size up the competition.

ChannelAdvisor recently hired a marketer to spend a portion of his time crunching search data, Reavis says. The team uses his insights to find new topics to pursue with content and keywords to include on landing pages. When running into top-level keywords that generate tons of search traffic and for which there is heavy competition for rankings, Reavis’s team often sidesteps these keywords and targets topics with these three attributes:

1. Relevant to prospects’ needs
2. Somewhat lower search volume
3. Significantly less competition for rankings

“I will consider developing a piece of content around [the topic] or to try to work it into some current content that we have,” she says.

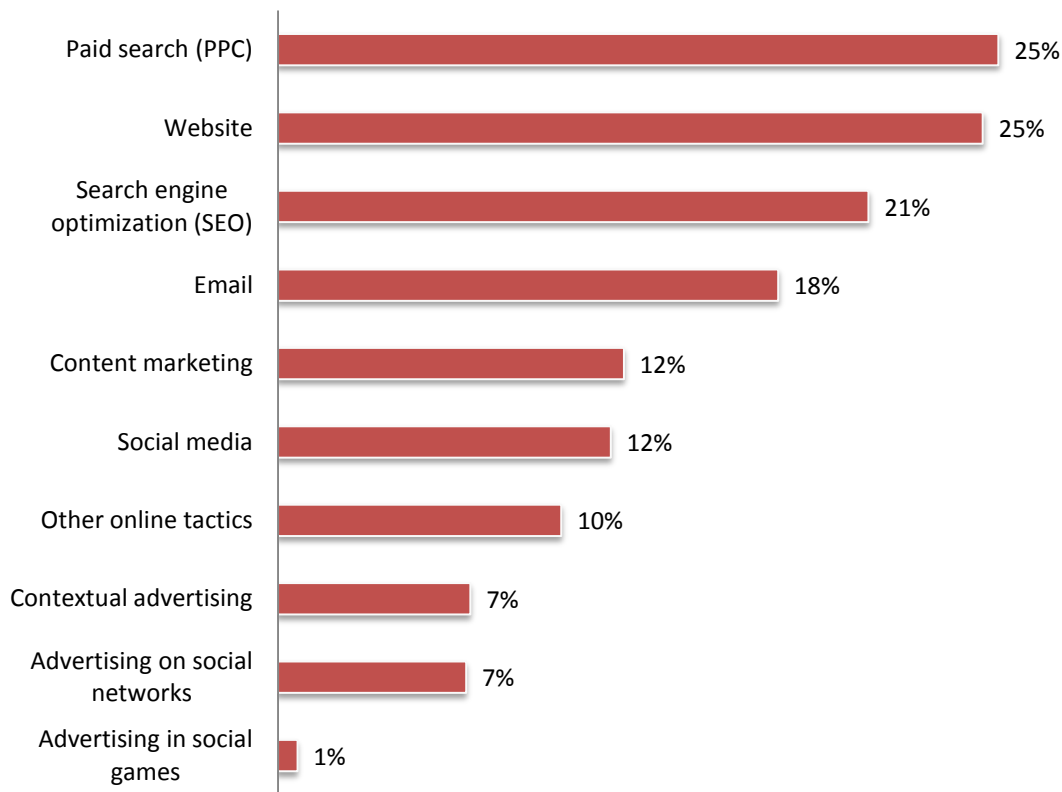
BUDGETING FOR CONTENT MARKETING

Inbound marketing – SEO, social media, content marketing – complements the way customers shop, namely, by starting online. Most organizations expect to increase marketing budgets for inbound marketing tactics, as these tactics are increasingly considered to be cost-effective methods for connecting with prospects and customers.

Survey results indicate that 60% of organizations intend to increase their social media marketing budgets. Budget increases in SEO and content marketing are also expected for 57% and 41% of organizations, respectively.

In terms of budget allocations, **organizations, on average, allocate 45% of their online marketing budgets to inbound marketing tactics.**

Chart: Allocation of online marketing dollars (representing 51% of total budgets on average)



Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Search Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded April 2011, N=1,530

Content is the cornerstone from which almost any marketing effort is built. Because **you become your own publisher with content marketing**, it is a great way to build your brand without spending additional money on media buys. And, when you consider the power of timely, relevant and engaging content to attract inbound traffic, it is no surprise that marketers are making sure to allocate budget to this end.

MEASURING THE RESULTS OF CONTENT MARKETING

Content marketing can drive results, but it's not always easy to "connect the dots." Nevertheless, marketers need to measure content marketing. Measurement reveals how your content fits into the customer's buying cycle, can identify the best formats, topics and strategies to use, and supports requests for more investment.

Tactic #1. Set a goal for every project

You cannot measure performance without setting a goal. Otherwise, what would you measure? Your goals dictate which metrics to track.

Here are three categories of high-level goals for content marketing:

1. **Driving Sales:** Individual pieces of content can increase site traffic, lead volume, conversion rate, etc.
2. **Saving Money:** Content can help cut cost-per-lead, customer service costs, etc.
3. **Making Customers Happier:** Content can help increase retention, customer lifetime value, etc.

Tactic #2. Track goals in three tiers

For many companies, the best way to measure content marketing is to track and combine results of individual projects rather than trying to tackle the entire program.

In this approach, content is tracked across three tiers of metrics. Each tier corresponds with a role in the organization, giving that person relevant data. Here are three tiers:

Tier 1. Creator-level metrics

The people who create your content need to know what works best and what's actually gaining traction. It's the only way they can efficiently improve results. This feedback comes in the form of granular metrics.

For a company blog, these metrics could include:

- Traffic: Page views, unique visitors, bounce rate, time spent
- Source: Referring sites, visitor demographics, inbound search keywords
- Sharing: Re-Tweets, shares

These metrics can be tracked post-by-post, across a topic, or across the channel (a blog in this case).

Tier 2. Manager-level metrics

The person who manages the content team is interested in higher-level metrics. For a blog, this could include:

- Lead volume generated

- Lead quality
- Cost-per-lead
- Conversion rate (for email opt-in, downloads, etc.)
- Market share, awareness, qualitative feedback

Tier 3. Director-level metrics

Executives have little interest in manager-level metrics and nearly no interest in creator-level metrics. They need to know how content impacts the bottom line. For a blog, they want to know how it has improved:

- Revenue
- Costs
- ROI
- Customer lifetime value
- Related areas

Tactic #3. Measure large programs with an index

SAP is a global, enterprise-level company that provides business management solutions. It staffs thousands of marketers, with most creating content. Combining this with SAP's benchmark reports, social media outlets and other content gives the company a massive and growing library.

Michal Brenner, Senior Director of Global Integrated Marketing at SAP, is tasked with identifying the content that drives the highest ROI for the company and establishing best practices. He believes measurement is "extremely important" at this scale, but tracking results piece-by-piece is impractical, especially when much of the content is repurposed.

"It's difficult to say that the success of a whitepaper should always be determined by the number of registrations it generates because we'll take that same whitepaper and use part of it in an email, or a blog post, or in an article on our website," he says.

Here are two examples of the advanced tracking and analysis that SAP uses to measure content marketing across the organization:

GAUGING OVERALL ENGAGEMENT

Rather than tracking individual pieces of content, SAP created an index it calls "Return on Interesting." The index scores the amount of engagement the company's content generated in a particular category or market.

The index (a work-in-progress) was created by a cross-functional team of executives and specialists in operations, IT, analysis and marketing.

The score is calculated from a combination of 13 content-related metrics, including:

- Site traffic

- Bounce rate
- Time spent
- Social sharing
- Commenting

“Those kinds of metrics are being seen as the driver of our future growth,” Brenner says. “We’re currently creating a baseline for that, and then we’re going to look to see if we’re improving that over time.”

MEASURING IMPACT

Many companies attribute to the “last touch.” If a customer makes a purchase after seeing a television ad, a billboard and a paid search ad, they attribute all the revenue to the paid search ad for tracking purposes.

This is a simple but flawed approach. The television ad in this example is not credited for influencing the sale, even though it may have sparked the customer’s initial interest.

SAP takes a different approach. The team analyzes customers’ paths to purchase to see which types of content and interactions were best at attracting, engaging and converting leads.

“Each of those different touch points receive an allocation value based on the closing revenues,” Brenner says. “We’re looking at any company that becomes a customer, how many touch points they had, and what is the relative value of each of those touch points. ... I know exactly what new properties and what content types drove the highest return on investment, and when I say ‘return,’ I mean revenue.”

Tactic #4. Fill gaps and grab opportunities

Measuring for the sake of measurement is a waste of time. **Companies need to measure content marketing to know where to improve and where to invest.**

Here are two examples of shifts the experts made in response to metrics and analysis:

FOLLOW THE RESULTS

Measurement reveals what is working in your strategy. If your goal is to generate leads, then your analysis can be as simple as:

- Step 1. Gather the content that attracts the most high-quality traffic to your site
- Step 2. Identify consistent topics, formats and styles
- Step 3. Test using those attributes in new content

Joe Pulizzi is the founder of Content Marketing Institute. His team looked at sharing activity and other metrics and discovered that the business social network LinkedIn could be an area of opportunity.

“LinkedIn has been growing like crazy from a social media sharing standpoint for our content. So we are looking seriously at how to take more advantage of that. ... We may have to be more serious about how we share or build relationships there.”

FINDING GAPS IN CONTENT

Brenner's team analyzed the paths to purchase for customers who purchased one of SAP's cloud-computing solutions. The team realized:

- Customers toward the end of the buying cycle were interested in product-specific content, and the team had plenty of it.
- Customers in the beginning of the cycle were interested in content on how cloud computing could help solve their challenges. However, the team had very little of this content.

In response, Brenner interviewed customers for a series of blog posts that highlighted their challenges and how SAP's products helped.

"It generated tremendous amounts of traffic and comments, and it was great exposure for these customers," Brenner says.

Tactic #5. Invest in tracking and analysis

There are free tools you can use to measure results. The most popular, Google Analytics, can reveal:

- Most downloaded, viewed and shared content on your site
- Sources of inbound traffic
- Natural search keywords used to find your site

That said, if you want to track visitors on a one-to-one basis or understand how content impacts willingness to purchase, you will need to pay. If that scares you, realize that many companies spend thousands of dollars each year on content and that tracking results can reveal how to improve ROI.

"We're so infatuated with the creative that we don't take two seconds to look at how this is making an impact on our customers," Pulizzi says. "[Tracking software] is not glamorous. I can't hold or touch or feel it, but you can take that feedback from the technology and then improve the content you have."

ANALYSTS CAN BE AMAZING

Having someone in the office that is handy with spreadsheets help you interpret data and point to the best opportunities. One reason SAP is able to learn so much about its customers and content is that it has teams of people dedicated to measurement and analysis.

"I don't think [these staff members] need an advanced degree in stats," Brenner says. "It's really about having a team of dedicated analysts."

INSIGHTS ON SUCCESSES WITH CONTENT MARKETING

WHAT DO MARKETERS SAY WORKS WELL WHEN IT COMES TO THEIR CONTENT MARKETING?

- Rather than simply throwing content out there sporadically, this year we have moved toward delivering a steady pace of content through social media channels.
- We monitor bit.ly clicks to help us determine which shared content is sticky, and steer our content collection/sharing/creation toward that. We also use Facebook insights to learn about our Fans' demographics, as well as activity/engagement.
- Facebook is the third highest source of referrals to our website. Seeing this has prompted us to increase the number of posts and to be more regular with our posts. Also, we have increased the number of posts that are "teasers" to more content on our website, in order to push people over.
- Metrics provide a good idea of what's popular on sites like YouTube and helps drive the types of content that we need to focus on.
- We've explored keywords and sentiment to align our content to the needs of our audience. We've also used this information to help improve other channels (such as paid search).
- We believe very strongly in social media. We also believe that social media starts with our team and our own website. So we focus our budget on having great content and a great website to store that content. Social media then acts like a network that distributes that content.
- In the financial services sector, engaging your brand advocates is much more challenging than other retail or CPG categories. So, the emphasis in a social media strategy should be on creating quality content that your followers, fans, etc. will find engaging, educational, and worth sharing with their network. This positive association with your brand will go a long way in creating brand advocacy in the social space.
- We are a heavy content-oriented organization, and automate our syndication to create social buzz. We work very hard to engage through a range of mediums, with both industry figures and potential customers.
- Having a fully functioning Facebook Fan Page is critical. Populate as many of the call-to-action functions as you can, tastefully. Most importantly, post quality content for your audience. Find the nuggets, or better yet, write the nuggets of really appropriate content. End each post with a really engaging question to encourage interaction between yourself and your audience. Talk to them and encourage conversations on your topics. Try to draw in other readers as participants in the dialog. Include in your Facebook posts a link back to a specific post on your blog. This is an ongoing campaign, not a one-time shot.
- When we feature a member who is very active in social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) in one of our e-newsletter stories or our digital membership magazine, that person shares the story on those same social media pages, which shows the value of that person's membership and also spreads the content we provide to our members.

- By automating the posting of our blog content and Twitter feed to a mostly ignored Facebook Page, we were able to grow our fans from 30,000 to almost 200,000 in the past seven months. Our goal is to actively add content and spark discussion on the page to increase our fans to half a million this year.
- Company-branded presentation at a conference had 34 attendees. Posted fully scripted presentation on SlideShare, Tweeted some of the content, and added blog entry with embedded presentation. Had over 5,000 views within 24 hours and notified as one of the top viewed presentations that day. Numerous Tweets about it. Conclusion: Achieved more domain credibility that we could have with perhaps 20 presentations on the subject.
- We see that our corporate blog is really successful, because it discusses topics in a fairly controversial way. But it makes people discuss and interact. Also, including social sharing buttons in emails is working. I think people like the idea that they found valuable content, and “bought” it (by registering to the download form), and can now share “for free” (the social media links point directly to the documents; no registration is required anymore).

INSIGHTS ON CHALLENGES WITH CONTENT MARKETING

WHAT DO MARKETERS SAY ARE THEIR BIGGEST CONTENT MARKETING CHALLENGES?

- Content specific to related markets delivered at the right time in the buying process.
- Content marketing through blog and targeted webpage development
- Creation of high quality educational content that we use to nurture prospects towards our offer. Revision on website copy to maintain accurate communications with NEW inbound leads.
- [My biggest challenge is] finding relevant and worthwhile content or information to communicate to “fans” or customers that is appropriate for social media.
- Generating valuable content on website
- Providing pertinent content to our prospects
- Delivering the right content to the right person at the appropriate time in the buying cycle.
- Resource management and allocation towards lead generation activities such as content marketing and SEO.
- Creating relevant content/offers that convey value, and are mapped to where our prospects are in the buying cycle.
- We operate with a very small team in sales and marketing and have very limited time and money resources to devote to this. Though I see this [content marketing] activity as a priority, these limitations make it difficult to produce the content that is needed for inbound marketing/lead generation.
- Availability of a continuously stream of value-added content to become a valuable source of information for our target audience.
- Understanding what the lead is interested in – what content if any that we offer.
- Clear content strategy and focus on publishing optimized inbound resources.
- Our marketing department spends more time in a customer support role instead of developing strategy and content.

About MarketingSherpa LLC

MarketingSherpa is a primary research facility, wholly-owned by MECLABS, dedicated to determining **what works in marketing** via exclusive case studies, surveys, and results data analysis. Then we publish what we learn so our community of marketers and weekly readers can improve their results and train their teams.

Praised by *The Economist*, Harvard Business School's Working Knowledge Site and Entrepreneur.com, MarketingSherpa is distinguished by offering **practical, results-based marketing** information researched and written by a staff of in-house reporters.

MarketingSherpa features:

- **Best Practices:** 1,000+ brand-side marketer case studies and 3,500+ creative samples
- **Research:** 2,000+ marketing and research abstracts
- **Instruction:** 800+ how-to articles
- **Newsletters:** 230,000+ marketers read weekly case studies on topics such as email, search, social, lead generation, lead nurturing, optimization and content marketing
- **Training:** 100+ live, hands-on training sessions providing practical and proven solutions
- **Summits:** 3 annual vendor-neutral, research-based marketing events

About MECLABS

MECLABS is a science lab that uses real-world research and training to **help business leaders get better use out of sales and marketing technology and resources**, including Internet marketing, website optimization, and lead management. We have been involved in direct research partnerships with companies throughout Europe and North America since 2001.

MECLABS deploys a rigorous methodology to conduct research. This research is compiled from:

- More than **10 years** of research partnership with our clients
- **1,300** experiments
- Over **1 billion** emails
- **10,000** landing pages tested
- **5 million** telephone calls
- **500,000** decision maker conversations

MECLABS has consulted with companies like Cisco, Johnson & Johnson, *The New York Times*, 1-800-Flowers, and NetSuite to optimize sales and marketing processes and achieve triple-digit ROI gains.

Register for Summits and Workshops at MECLABS.com/training or contact:
Customer Service (available M-F, 9:00am-5:00pm ET)
service@marketingsherpa.com
1-877-895-1717 (outside the U.S. call 401-383-3131)

MarketingSherpa Membership

Free Special Reports and 30-Minute Marketers, 20% off all MarketingSherpa publications, training, and events and a Librarian to guide you

MarketingSherpa membership is one of the best deals going. For only \$397 per year, you can get more than **\$1,700 worth of our research** and **20% off of every purchase**. Add in your own research librarian and members-only perks, and this is an opportunity that any serious marketer cannot afford to ignore.

Membership Benefits



- **10+ Special Reports FREE every year (\$970+ if purchased separately)**
Special Reports are an outgrowth of our Benchmark Reports and Handbooks, offering a more focused look at specific areas of marketing. Typically fewer than 15 pages in length, these reports contain a wealth of insights, yet are kept brief to accommodate the busy marketer. Our members get each and every Special Report for free (they are normally \$97 in our store). That's more than \$970 worth of research included for free as part of your membership.



- **The 30-Minute Marketer – FREE for members (normally \$47 each in our store)**
You wish you had an extra day in the week to read about the latest developments in marketing, but warping time and space is not in your marketing budget. The *30-Minute Marketer* is the solution. About twice every month, we go through the most interesting material on a single topic, find additional information and resources, and publish a report that you can read over lunch with time to spare.



- **20% discount on everything!**
Information is power, and marketers spend thousands of dollars every year on MarketingSherpa publications, workshops, and Summits. The math is simple - if you were going to attend one of our Summits and buy a few books, this discount alone would pay for all other membership benefits.



- **Member-exclusive librarian service**
To help our members find the right resources and get the answers they need, we've added a new members-only librarian service. Need to know about a specific area of marketing? No problem ... if we've got research on the topic, our experts will help you find it.



- **Exclusive member-only perks**
From time-to-time, we will inform you of special member-only perks – things like special deals, member-exclusive webinars, round-table breakfasts at Summits, and more. You are valuable to us and we'll show our appreciation with unique benefits just for you.

So what are you waiting for? You get all of the above for only \$397. The free publications alone total more than \$1,700 - and that doesn't even account for the valuable discount savings and our convenient librarian service. You can get started right away by visiting the link below. Thanks for your time and consideration!

Start Your Membership Today!
www.MarketingSherpa.com/Membertour



1300 Marsh Landing Parkway Suite 106
Jacksonville, FL 32250

www.meclabs.com